## Earth Day and Living Green

It's no coincidence that April is the month for Earth Day. With springtime, and everything starting to bloom, it's a time when many of us are looking to the outdoors and enjoying what our planet has to offer. Earth Day is much more than an event or a day on the calendar. It celebrates opportunities for committing to protect our environment for our quality of life and for the generations to come.

Celebrate Earth Day with the Reading Climate Committee on <u>April 27 at the Mattera Cabin</u>, <u>1481 Main Street</u>, <u>from 10 AM to 2 PM</u>. Come and learn what Reading has to offer with outdoor nature walks, and indoor exhibits on town and watershed programs.

The first Earth Day kicked off a movement that has improved our lives and our planet beyond what could have been imagined. Gaylord Nelson, then a U.S. Senator from Wisconsin, was inspired by the student anti-war movement, and set out to stimulate public consciousness about air and water pollution to put environmental protection on our national agenda.

As a result of Nelson's vision, on April 22, 1970, 20 million Americans took to the streets to demonstrate for a healthy, sustainable environment coast-to-coast with thousands of protests against the deterioration of the environment. Groups that had been fighting against raw sewage in our waterways, toxic dumps across the nation, oil spills, polluting factories and power plants, pesticides, freeways, the extinction of wildlife and loss of wilderness, suddenly realized they shared common values. (See www.earthday.org).

While we rarely see raw sewage in our waterways nowadays, and toxic dumps across the nation have been closed, there's still work to be done when we see oil spills, polluting power plants, and loss of wilderness. We still have many shared common values and many things we can do to protect what we have.

We can learn from one participant at the first Earth Day, Ed Begley, an American actor and environmentalist who, in 1970, embarked then on a path toward "living green" (see interview at http://studiocity.patch.com/). To Ed, living green means, "to do everything you can." Ed didn't try to do a bunch of things he couldn't afford or couldn't pull off. He started simple: recycling, composting, using biodegradable soaps and detergents. All these things were and are good for the environment; and, good for saving money.

Begley didn't stop there. As he lived a little green, he saved some money, and started doing more and more. He now has an array of solar voltaic panels on the roof of his house, as well as an underground rainwater storage tank that's 550 gallons. Begley has a show "Living with Ed" on Planet Green to help show people how he's living green.

Beyond the photovoltaics which provide electricity, Begley also uses the sun to provide solar hot water. He rides his bike or takes public transportation most days, and when he drives, he drives an electric car. He sounds like he has a race with himself, "to keep upping the ante as I become comfortable with the things I started 42 years ago."

As Ed's story shows, there are a lot more choices in 2013 than there were in 1970 to help you live greener. You can buy energy-saving light bulbs almost anywhere, and energy-saving thermostats at any hardware store and on the internet.

You can buy weather-stripping that's very easy to install. There's great local public transportation and more bike lanes than ever before. If you don't have room for a vegetable garden in your yard, there are many community supported agriculture options. It's less expensive, more healthy, and easier on the environment if you eat vegetables instead of meat.

The point is, there are simply so many opportunities for people to live greener that are very cost effective. You'll get a taste for doing more because you'll find you have extra money in your pocket after a very short time of doing these things. So start with these options, and learn more at the Earth Day Fair.

A column by Reading Climate Committee member Gina Snyder